

**Valley Bible Church**  
**Sermon Notes for August 6, 2017**

**The Serving Son**  
**Mark 10:35-45**

I. The selfish request (10:35-37)

*And James and John, the sons of Zebedee, came up to him and said to him, "Teacher, we want you to do for us whatever we ask of you." 36 And he said to them, "What do you want me to do for you?" 37 And they said to him, "Grant us to sit, one at your right hand and one at your left, in your glory."*

- “And James and John, the sons of Zebedee, came up to him...”
  - Both are mentioned as participants of the inner three including Peter
  - “The nickname Jesus gave them, ‘sons of thunder’ (3:17), may indicate volatile or aggressive personalities, and it is perhaps this disposition that prompts them to act.”<sup>1</sup>
  - That nickname might help explain their boldness in this passage
- “... and said to him, ‘Teacher, we want you to do for us whatever we ask of you.’”
  - Sounds like a completely entitled and selfish demand
  - They knew they were talking to the Messiah so it is amazing that they exerted such a demanding attitude
- “And he said to them, ‘What do you want me to do for you?’”
  - Jesus casually played along with their demands
  - He asks what they wanted in order to let them talk and reveal their hearts
- “And they said to him, ‘Grant us to sit, one at your right hand and one at your left, in your glory.’”
  - The demand sounds shocking and selfish
  - While this strikes us as distasteful and out of place, we can see James and John have some things right
    - They believe Jesus is the Messiah
    - Their request is certain of the Kingdom Jesus will lead
      - “In your glory” or Matthew 20:21 says, “in your kingdom”
  - On the other hand, they were clearly misunderstanding Jesus’ words

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<sup>1</sup> Strauss, 454.

- Jesus had just predicted His suffering and death for the third time!
- They can only think about Christ's glorious Kingdom
- Being 2 of the inner 3, they probably thought their request was reasonable
- Right hand = Greatest honor
  - Son, heir or chief advisor to the King
- Left hand = Next best possible seat in the Kingdom
- All in all, this is a selfish request
- Jesus responds with patience seizing the opportunity to teach again

## II. The suffering required (10:38-40)

*Jesus said to them, "You do not know what you are asking. Are you able to drink the cup that I drink, or to be baptized with the baptism with which I am baptized?" 39 And they said to him, "We are able." And Jesus said to them, "The cup that I drink you will drink, and with the baptism with which I am baptized, you will be baptized, 40 but to sit at my right hand or at my left is not mine to grant, but it is for those for whom it has been prepared."*

- "Jesus said to them, 'You do not know what you are asking.'"
  - Jesus, rather than rebuking the disciples for such an insensitive question, plays along and chooses to answer the question
  - Of course, Jesus' answer reveals the difficulty of their request
  - The reality was, given their current frame of mind, they were not going to come close to having their request granted
  - They did not realize the suffering that was necessary in order to attain to such a place of prominence in the kingdom
- "'Are you able to drink the cup that I drink, or to be baptized with the baptism with which I am baptized?'"
  - Jesus presents two metaphors that highlight His imminent suffering
  - These metaphors of the cup and baptism stand as another instance of Jesus foretelling His own suffering and death
  - The cup has symbolized God's judgment and wrath in the OT
    - **Psalm 75:7-8** "but it is God who executes judgment, putting down one and lifting up another. 8 For in the hand of the LORD there is a cup with foaming wine, well mixed, and he pours out from it, and all the wicked of the earth shall drain it down to the dregs."
    - **Isaiah 51:7** "Wake yourself, wake yourself, stand up, O Jerusalem, you who have drunk from the hand of the

LORD the cup of his wrath, who have drunk to the dregs the bowl, the cup of staggering.”

- The cup of God’s wrath and punishment awaited Jesus while in the garden of Gethsemane
  - Mark 14:36 “And he said, “Abba, Father, all things are possible for you. Remove this cup from me. Yet not what I will, but what you will.”
- Baptism too is a parallel or synonymous metaphor for suffering
- In the Old Testament, baptism could mean cleansing or washing
- However, baptism could also mean to overflow, to flood, or to sweep away to one’s death
  - **Psalm 69:1-2, 14-15** “Save me, O God! For the waters have come up to my neck. 2 I sink in deep mire, where there is no foothold; I have come into deep waters, and the flood sweeps over me... Deliver me from sinking in the mire; let me be delivered from my enemies and from the deep waters. 15 Let not the flood sweep over me, or the deep swallow me up, or the pit close its mouth over me.”
- Jesus elsewhere mentioned His mission in terms of baptism
  - Luke 12:50 “I have a baptism to be baptized with, and how great is my distress until it is accomplished!”
- We as believers share in Christ’s death through baptism
  - Romans 6:3-4 “Do you not know that all of us who have been baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into his death? 4 We were buried therefore with him by baptism into death, in order that, just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, we too might walk in newness of life.”
- “And they said to him, ‘We are able.’”
  - The disciples quickly claim their willingness to follow Jesus’ steps
  - It’s safe to say that James and John did not realize the extent to which these metaphors were indicating
- “And Jesus said to them, ‘The cup that I drink you will drink, and with the baptism with which I am baptized, you will be baptized,’”
  - Jesus confirms that James and John will in fact undergo the same suffering that He will experience
  - Jesus essentially confirms again that suffering is not an option for His followers

- Later, the Apostles confirm the reality of suffering for all who are in Christ Jesus
  - 1 Peter 4:12-13 “Beloved, do not be surprised at the fiery trial when it comes upon you to test you, as though something strange were happening to you. 13 But rejoice insofar as you share Christ’s sufferings, that you may also rejoice and be glad when his glory is revealed.”
- ““But to sit at my right hand or at my left is not mine to grant, but it is for those for whom it has been prepared.””
  - Jesus has done everything in His ministry in accordance with the will of God the Father
  - In the same way here, Jesus states that the Father determines the seating chart for the Kingdom
  - Notice that Jesus does not deny the reality of the Kingdom and His glory as the King of the Kingdom
    - These realities are destined to take place but now is not the time
  - As much as the disciples and ourselves would love to know the seating chart in the Kingdom, that is not Jesus’ focus
    - Instead, the focus highlights the shocking reality that the first will be last and that the greatest will be a servant and slave of all

### III. The Son’s ransom (10:41-45)

*And when the ten heard it, they began to be indignant at James and John. 42 And Jesus called them to him and said to them, "You know that those who are considered rulers of the Gentiles lord it over them, and their great ones exercise authority over them. 43 But it shall not be so among you. But whoever would be great among you must be your servant, 44 and whoever would be first among you must be slave of all. 45 For even the Son of Man came not to be served but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many."*

- “And when the ten heard it, they began to be indignant at James and John.”
  - How did the ten hear about the conversation between Jesus, James, and John?
    - Perhaps they overheard the conversation from nearby (vv. 35-40)
    - They weren’t in the immediate presence of Jesus when this request was made (v. 42)
  - Why were the 10 angered at the request of James and John?

- One might think that the ten's anger is based upon the fact that James and John have just asked a tactless and insensitive question to Jesus
  - However, the reality is that they are probably upset that James and John beat them to the punch
  - James and John asked Jesus about this privilege before they had
- “And Jesus called them to him and said to them, ‘You know that those who are considered rulers of the Gentiles lord it over them, and their great ones exercise authority over them.’”
    - Jesus invited the angry 10 to join and hear this important teaching
    - It appears to be a general truth that the typical style of leadership from the world's rulers and authorities is one of ruling over
      - There is no doubt that the disciples had plenty of data and experience to understand what Jesus was saying
      - Roman dominance over Palestine and the Herodian dynasty over the Jews in Palestine were examples of lording it over others
- ““But it shall not be so among you. But whoever would be great among you must be your servant, and whoever would be first among you must be slave of all.”
    - The worldly paradigm of leadership and greatness would not be the paradigm of Jesus' followers
    - However, look at how far in the opposite direction Jesus takes this teaching
    - He does not simply say that the disciples must be nice leaders who are sensible, not oppressing the people they will lead
    - He goes to the extreme and says that the great will be known as servants
      - It was a disgraceful and lowly position full of mundane and menial tasks
    - Not only does Jesus describe the great as servants but He describes the “first” as the “slave of all”
      - Slave is an even lower and more derogatory position than a servant
      - World of disciples believed those of prominence were those who had everyone underneath them as a subordinate
      - God's perspective defines the greatest as the one beneath everyone else

- How does this servant and slavelike lifestyle look for us?
  - 1 Corinthians 9:19 “For though I am free from all, I have made myself a servant to all, that I might win more of them.”
  - 1 Peter 5:2-3 “shepherd the flock of God that is among you, exercising oversight, not under compulsion, but willingly, as God would have you; not for shameful gain, but eagerly; 3 not domineering over those in your charge, but being examples to the flock.”
  - Galatians 5:13 “For you were called to freedom, brothers. Only do not use your freedom as an opportunity for the flesh, but through love serve one another.”
- “For even the Son of Man came not to be served but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many.”
  - Jesus continues to identify Himself as the Messiah or Son of Man
  - God is so serious and consistent with His definition of greatness that the King of Kings came as a servant
  - The Son of God and rightful heir of the earth and all that it contains came to earth as a slave
  - Jesus came not to receive what was rightfully His in terms of praise, glory, adoration and worship; but instead, He came to give
  - His service permeated all that He did in His earthly ministry
  - However, the pinnacle and apex of His service would be in the sacrifice of His own life on behalf of undeserving mankind
  - He describes His service as giving His life, “as a ransom for many”
    - The most common understanding of “ransom” throughout the Scriptures is one of payment offered to free slaves or those in bondage
    - This word “ransom” can also be used in reference to a payment, sacrifice or offering unto the gods for appeasement
    - Finally, in Mark’s gospel we have a glimpse into the significance and purpose of Jesus’ death
    - Jesus has been predicting His death, but the reader might still be dumbfounded asking, “Why must you die, Jesus!?”
    - Jesus’ death was no failure or natural end that every human must embrace
    - Jesus’ death was a payment to God!

- It was a ransom for the purpose of freeing us from our slavery to our own sin
- Satan's influence in the world in which we live need no longer dictate what we do with our lives
- We can stop trying to do the impossible
- We can stop trying to work our way to God and eternal life like the rich young ruler was trying to do
- Instead, we can trust in Jesus' death as payment for our sins
- We no longer remain under the inevitable judgment of God's wrath for those who have rejected Jesus' payment and ransom
- Isaiah 53:10-11 "Yet it was the will of the LORD to crush him; he has put him to grief; when his soul makes an offering for guilt, he shall see his offspring; he shall prolong his days; the will of the LORD shall prosper in his hand. 11 Out of the anguish of his soul he shall see and be satisfied; by his knowledge shall the righteous one, my servant, make many to be accounted righteous, and he shall bear their iniquities."
- It is because of this greatest act of service that we are saved
- And it is because of this Good News that we must give ourselves to service
  - Every time we serve, we model our Savior who served to save us
  - 1 John 3:16 "By this we know love, that he laid down his life for us, and we ought to lay down our lives for the brothers."